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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General continues official visit to Portugal.

* Zaire suspends expulsion of Rwandan and Burundi refugees.

* Secretary-General recommends further reduction of UNCRO troop strength to 2,500.

* Ukrainian peace-keepers withdraw from Gorazde; British expected to follow shortly.

* Special Rapporteur's report on Human Rights in Former Yugoslavia says Bosnian Serbs committed gross violations in Srebrenica.

* Haitian Provisional Electoral Council announces second round of parliamentary and local elections 17 September.

* Secretary-General says international law must invent new mechanism for peaceful settlement of post-cold-war conflicts.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is in Lisbon on an official visit to Portugal. Yesterday he met with Jose Luis Jesus, the Ambassador of Cape Verde to Portugal and former Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, to discuss the mission the Ambassador will undertake, once he is formally appointed, as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region. In that capacity, Ambassador Jesus will initiate preparations for a conference on security, stability and development in the region. Ambassador Jesus left Lisbon for New York today to begin his work and, shortly thereafter, he will visit the East African Great Lakes region.

On Wednesday evening, the Secretary-General had a lengthy meeting on Western Sahara with Ambassador Ahmed Snousi of Morocco; Emmanuel Roucounas, the independent jurist appointed pursuant to the settlement plan; and Erik Jensen, the Secretary-General's Acting Special Representative for Western Sahara. The Moroccan Ambassador delivered a message to the Secretary-General from his Prime Minister regarding the identification process and an agreement was reached at the meeting to accelerate the process.

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The Secretary-General then met with Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso for a comprehensive review of international matters, including the situations in the former Yugoslavia, East Timor, Angola, Mozambique, and Sao Tome and Principe. The Secretary-General stressed the importance of the continuing series of meetings between Indonesia and Portugal, the next round of which would be in London in January. While noting that their positions remained far apart, he expressed his optimism that a solution would eventually be found, based on his feeling that the political will existed to work towards that end.

Following his meeting at the Foreign Ministry, the Secretary-General had lunch with Foreign Minister Durao Barroso and Diogo Freitas do Amaral, a professor at the Catholic University of Lisbon and a former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as a presidential candidate, who is expected to be elected President of the General Assembly in September.

The Secretary-General was also meeting with Prime Minister Anibal Avaco Silva. He was then to receive the Secretary of State at the Council of Ministers of Angola, Carlos Feijo, who would bring him a message from Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos.

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The tide may have turned in the Rwandan refugee crisis, according to a United Nations spokesman. Zaire informed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today that it was suspending its expulsion policy and would welcome a visit by the High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, to try to find a way to resume a truly voluntary repatriation programme with the cooperation of all the parties. Mrs. Ogata is expected to undertake her mission to the region this weekend.

Today's decision by Zaire follows its forcible expulsion of over 15,000 people to Rwanda and the outflow of 173,000 refugees, many from Burundi, out of refugee camps in Zaire to avoid forced repatriation.

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The Secretary-General has recommended that the troop strength of the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) be further reduced between now and mid-November to about 2,500. The force currently stands at less than 8,750 soldiers, which is the authorized ceiling.

In a report to the Security Council, dated 23 August, he said Croatia's reintegration by force of the former Sectors West, South and North had eliminated the need for infantry battalions in these areas. He recommended that all remaining battalions, except the two in Sector East, be withdrawn starting immediately. Further reductions thereafter might be appropriate depending on the evolution of UNCRO's mandate and the results of current peace

initiatives.

Unless there was a concerted effort by both sides to support the implementation of the UNCRO mandate, abide by the 29 March 1994 cease-fire agreement, and negotiate a lasting settlement, he said the continued usefulness of battalions in Sector East was in doubt. UNCRO's immediate task in the Sector was to try and re-establish the regime created by the cease-fire agreement. If that could be achieved, the Secretary-General said he was inclined to think there could be a continuing role for United Nations forces in the Sector. However, he would only recommend a continuing presence if the parties demonstrated a new spirit of cooperation. This would require giving UNCRO unrestricted freedom of movement, returning all seized observation posts and putting a complete stop to the hijacking of United Nations vehicles.

The Secretary-General said he had instructed Special Representative Yasushi Akashi to pursue consultations urgently with the Croatian Government and the local Serb leadership to define in detail a possible mandate for UNCRO that he could recommend to the Security Council. He also instructed Mr. Akashi to discuss with the Croatian Government what tasks, if any, UNCRO could perform elsewhere in Croatia. Such tasks could include monitoring and good offices in relation to the Prevlaka peninsula and Dubrovnik; monitoring of Croatia's international border with Bosnia and Herzegovina; and monitoring of the Croatian police and other matters relating to human rights in those parts of Croatia in which a minority Serb community remained.

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The withdrawal of United Nations peace-keepers from the United Nations safe area of Gorazde was partially completed today, according to a United Nations spokesman. Seventy-two Ukrainians left the enclave yesterday and are due in Belgrade today. The Ukrainians' position was considered untenable after they were forcibly disarmed by Bosnian Government soldiers last month. The 180 British peace-keepers stationed in Gorazde are due to withdraw shortly.

The Secretary-General has stressed that the enclave is not being abandoned. United Nations military observers will remain, backed up by a threat of NATO airpower to defend Gorazde, the one remaining United Nations safe area in eastern Bosnia, and its 60,000 residents.

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The former Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia, who resigned last month, says "gross violations of human rights" were committed by Bosnian Serbs against the mainly Muslim population of Srebrenica. In his final report to the Economic and Social Council dated 22 August, Tadeusz Mazowiecki says evidence so far obtained leads to the chilling conclusion that mass executions may have occurred.

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The report says further conclusions on the total number executed and the fate of those unaccounted for would be impossible to draw without access to the territory under control of the Bosnian Serbs, the examination of the sites, and the exhumation and examination of corpses which may be found. The fact that thousands of people, mainly men of draft age, were still missing from Srebrenica was a matter of great concern.

Mr. Mazowiecki said it was vital that investigations continue and the Bosnian Serbs grant immediate access to the area. He called on all military intelligence sources to turn over relevant information to competent United Nations bodies and in particular the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serb authorities should immediately account for the thousands reportedly still missing and grant the International Committee of the Red Cross access to detention facilities. The former Special Rapporteur said the international community should provide immediate assistance and financial support to the displaced to rebuild their lives, with particular emphasis placed on the building of permanent settlements.

He said the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa brought tragedy, loss of life and serious human rights violations to the inhabitants of those areas. At the same time, it seriously undermined the credibility of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the whole United Nations system.

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Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council has announced that the second round of parliamentary and local elections will be held on 17 September. According to a United Nations spokesman, only a few Senators and Deputies were elected in the first round with more than 50 percent of the vote. The second round is designed to determine the winner in those contests where neither candidate won a majority the first time around.

The elections will produce members of two-thirds of the Senate and all representatives of the Chamber of Deputies.

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The Secretary-General says new principles of international law are needed in today's unruly post-cold-war world to enable the conduct of States to be rationalized, controlled and regulated. In a speech delivered today to the Institute of International Law in Lisbon, which was presided over and addressed by Portuguese President Mario Soares, the Secretary-General proposed the convening of a major world conference during this fiftieth anniversary year to re-examine all legal mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States.

The Secretary-General said there seemed to be a need to re-establish the international legal order on firmer foundations, to extend law-making action

on behalf of disarmament and to rethink the machinery for settling disputes. He attached high importance to the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty in 1996 and reiterated support for a convention to ban anti-personnel land-mines. Such a convention could be modelled after the chemical weapons Convention, signed in Paris in January 1993.

It was time to rethink the whole issue of how the United Nations could ensure the settlement of civil wars, he said, and for the legal community and States as a whole to establish procedures for the peaceful settlement of these new types of conflict. "International law must draw conclusions from the new disorder and the rule of law must invent new procedures so that it can better serve peace and international security," he concluded.

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